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ABSTRACT

Noting that the most common problem reported by adults in the early childhood educational setting or in the home is getting children to behave, this booklet presents ideas for teachers and parents to help them plan for changes in behavior. The booklet is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "Basics of Good Behavior Guidance," provides information on child development, the relationship between brain development and behavior, and other basics of behavior guidance, including the importance of understanding the child's cultural background, of teaching social competence, and of understanding reasons for misbehavior. Chapter 2, "Indirect Guidance Strategies," focuses on preventive strategies such as providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum and environment, allowing children to make choices, using praise appropriately, and enhancing children's self-esteem. Chapter 3, "Direct Guidance Techniques," offers techniques such as using positive reinforcement, ignoring or redirecting inappropriate behavior, using reflective listening, using natural and logical consequences, and setting realistic expectations for change. The booklet concludes with a list of 15 print and Web site resources and an appended checklist and behavior guidance analysis form. (Contains 22 references.) (KB)

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Powerful, Positive, and Practical Practices:
Behavior Guidance Strategies

Jeanette C. Nunnelley, Ed.D.

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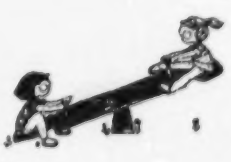

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INTRODUCTION

When asked what is the most common problem in the early childhood educational setting or in the home, most adults say, "Getting the children to **behave!**" Obtaining the behaviors we want in our classrooms and our homes requires knowledge of children, planning for changes in behavior, and resources to help guidance techniques.

This booklet is intended for anyone who nurtures and cares for young children. Although it is primarily directed to teachers in a structured setting, the family is the first teacher. Therefore many of the ideas apply to either the classroom or the home.

The booklet is divided into three chapters: ***The Basics of Behavior Guidance; Indirect Guidance Strategies*** (for preventing inappropriate behavior); and ***Direct Guidance Techniques*** (for assisting in changing inappropriate behavior). The collaboration all three chapters leads to acceptable behaviors in young children while enhancing self-esteem.

At the end of this booklet are two exercises in a form format, ***Best Practices for Behavior Guidance: A Checklist*** and ***Behavior Guidance Analysis Form.*** The ***Best Practices for Behavior Guidance: A Checklist*** helps the reader evaluate current practices in the classroom or home. Many behavior problems are really the result of the child's environment. It may be the adults in a child's life who may be getting the child into trouble through the actual physical setting, the schedule, or the expected activities. Second, the ***Behavior Guidance Analysis Form*** will assist in putting the information from the booklet into practice with a specific child. Indirect guidance techniques are explored, and the methods for using direct guidance strategies are suggested.

BASICS OF GOOD BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

Most behavior problems can be prevented! Simply understanding the basics of behavior guidance for young children often eliminates the necessity for more direct guidance techniques, such as time-out or other consequences to inappropriate behavior. The first step to prevention requires teachers to become knowledgeable about children and themselves. Parents can use the same awareness in their homes. Explore the following basics of good behavior guidance before ever "disciplining" a child.

Understand the Developmental Characteristics of the Children

The most basic of all prevention techniques is to understand the developmental characteristics of children, regardless of their ages. We must have expectations, environments, schedules and activities that meet the needs of the children. Knowledge of developmental characteristics for various ages does not excuse inappropriate behavior, but it helps us to understand it! Some very general developmental guidelines to consider for young children are listed in the following table.

General Development Guidelines

Infants need:

- Their physical needs met (food, sleep, diapering, etc.) to develop trust.
- Consistent schedule with flexibility.
- Opportunities to explore safely and to develop motor skills.
- Activities for developing: interest in others, self-awareness, eye-hand coordination, purposeful action and use of tools, expressions of feeling.

Preschool Children need:

- Opportunities to use their curiosity and imagination and to develop initiative.
- Lots of hands-on experiences; Not ditto sheets!
- Situations which help them establish relationships with other children.
- Literacy activities that will encourage the use of oral and written language.

School-Age Children need:

- Opportunities to demonstrate mastery, to be inventive and industrious, and to control their learning.
- Situations to interact with peers and to be alone with a special friend.
- Activities to collect things, to build, or to demonstrate a special talent or skill.

Gain Knowledge about Brain Development and Behavior

Recent developments in brain research have provided a bridge between neuroscience and education (Newberger, 1997). We now have a wealth of knowledge on how the brain functions and how experiences affect various chemicals in the body which in turn affect behavior. Through innovative, noninvasive imaging techniques, neuroscience has provided educators with a basis for working with children, which is grounded in physiology.

One of the most important aspects of brain development research is how stress created by harsh words, over-stimulation, or even boredom causes children to either "fight" or " flight". For example, have you ever forgotten someone's name you were about to introduce simply because you were afraid you would forget? Because of the fear, your brain effectively "shuts down" making it even harder for you to remember. You had taken "flight". Have you ever screamed harsh and unkind words in a difficult situation and later regretted you said them? For a moment, the area of your brain that makes you control unwanted actions wasn't working. Your body decided you should "fight". *(See RESOURCES: SECA Position Statement on Brain Research)*

These are over-simplifications, but children experience stressful situations every day. For some their only way of reacting is to stop paying attention. Others react in aggressive and hurtful ways. When these behaviors are repeated over and over again, the child's brain becomes "programmed" to react that way. Therefore, we must reduce stressful situations for children while providing them with examples of how to behave appropriately. When we ask children to wait for long periods or we use punishments that belittle and demean children, we are encouraging the chemicals in their bodies to initiate the flight or fight response. Once we understand this process, it becomes easier to

understand inattentive or aggressive behaviors. It also means we need to check our environment, our schedule, and the way we interact with children.

Respect the Culture in which Children Live

Cultural influences are often silent and invisible (Gonzalez-Mena 1998), but they are one of the most powerful factors guiding behavior. It is imperative that teachers understand and respect the various aspects of culture that may cause a child to behave in ways differently from the teacher's own culture or from the other children's culture. Gordon and Browne (1996) suggest that culture is an integral part of a person's social reality that starts at birth and determines values.

Factors, which must be considered in understanding a culture and therefore the child, include:

- The language spoken as well as the amount of talking permitted.
- Ideas about how children should develop socially and physically, such as eating and sleeping patterns.
- Expectations about dependence versus independence.
- Rituals and celebrations that are practiced.
- Roles and expectations for those in the family.
- Beliefs regarding the value and type of education.
- Beliefs and practices about how conflict is resolved.

Very subtle, but important variations, may occur in how a culture defines personal space, the frequency of smiling, the degree of eye contact, appropriateness of touch, the meaning of silence, and the concept of time (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001). Although teachers must be extremely careful about making generalizations about families from a particular culture, an awareness of that culture allows teachers to more fully understand the child. Additionally, the classroom curriculum should reflect and include a wide variety of cultures, regardless of whether they are represented in the classroom. According to York (1991), such practices teach children to value their own culture. Additionally they introduce children to other cultures while providing positive experiences exploring similarities and differences. Ultimately, children are taught how to live in a diverse world.

Believe in Teaching Social Competence

Social competence is the ability to initiate and maintain satisfying, reciprocal relationships (Katz & McClellan, 1997). It is the ability to behave appropriately. Never take for granted that children have the necessary skills to play effectively with others, to be popular with other children, to share, or to make their wants known in a constructive way just as you should never assume they know their colors or other specific skills, such as using scissors. First you observe and then you teach them through play situations. It should be the same for social competency skills, which applies either at home or at school.

Understand WHY Children Misbehave

Children **do** misbehave, as we all do! The stresses in life that make adults eat too much, procrastinate, abuse others and themselves are the same stresses children experience.

Understanding why a child misbehaves does not lessen the need to change inappropriate behavior, but it allows a teacher to select solutions and consequences that are sensitive and responsive to that child's life.

The following list highlights some of the reasons children get into trouble either in school or home (Reynolds, 1996; Cherry, 1983). How many have you experienced? Did any of them ever get you into trouble either as a child or as an adult?

Children misbehave because of:

- Separation from parents or someone significant in their life
- Parent-child attachment
- Visual, auditory, or other physical disabilities
- Allergies and environmental sensitivities
- Shyness
- Testing limits
- Illnesses (their own or a parent's illness)
- Death in the family
- Abuse and neglect by a parent or significant other
- Lack of quality time with parent or significant other
- New brother or sister or someone else taking time and affection away
- Unemployment, incarceration, alcoholism, drug abuse of parent or some other significant family stress

The Lonely Child

One very significant reason some children misbehave or become withdrawn is that they have few social skills (social competence) and, therefore, few friends. Not having friends contributes to loneliness, low self-esteem and furthers the inability to develop the needed social skills (Bullock, 1992).

There are measures we as teachers can take to help! First, observe the child to find out if other children ignore, avoid or reject the child. Does the child have trouble even entering a situation with other children? Does the child act aggressively and disruptive in attempts to get other children's attention? Does the child interpret other children's cues correctly and, therefore, react appropriately?

After observing, try specific measures to help the child. Give the child the language needed for appropriate interactions. Model exactly what to say. For example, "I like your block tower. Can I build one next to you?" Discuss as a group activity both positive and negative behavioral examples. Role-play situations on how to talk to a friend. Try out new behaviors for entering a group through dramatic play with small groups. Always give the child aggressively interacting with other children an opportunity for an alternative behavior. For example, "I can see you want to play with Sam. Can you think of a way to ask him instead of hitting him?" Be sure to offer another alternative solution if the child does not have one.

Encouraging social competence:

- Give specific appropriate language
- During group time talk about behaviors
- Role play situations one on one, then in small groups
- Acknowledge a need for an alternative behavior
- Suggest specific alternative behavior if needed

Be an Appropriate Model

If you want yelling in your classroom or home, yell. The children are sure to follow your example. If you want to hear "thank you" and "please" in your environment, say this to the children. All children repeat what they hear. Teachers and families must recognize that modeling is one of the most powerful tools available in guidance of behavior. Use it to encourage children to talk about their frustrations instead of using physical reactions to situations. Don't be afraid to show affection, to laugh, to cry, to be what you want your children to be. Just as you show children how to dress, to eat properly, or to use scissors; demonstrate to the child who has trouble entering a group how you would do it. Enact situations talking to a friend or even disagreeing in an appropriate way. Discuss "friendly" and "unfriendly" ways of behaving during large group time. Model and teach appropriate behavior for a variety of situations. Again, this applies to the classroom or the home.

Recognize the Unique Qualities of EVERY Child

Just as it is important to understand why children misbehave, it is essential to recognize the unique qualities of each and every

child. Even children that drive teachers and families crazy have redeeming qualities. The very same characteristic that allows a child to survive in his or her world may be the one that gets that child into trouble. That very same trait, such as aggressiveness, if channeled in the right direction, may produce a great leader in our society. Teachers and families should consciously note the aspects of every child, which makes him or her a distinctive individual. Be sure to view these distinctive characteristics in a positive way. Such reframing helps us see a child as "a questioner" rather than "sassy". We will see the aggressive child as a "go getter" or the "whiner" as "sensitive". Thus every child, regardless of his or her behavior, is accepted.

Recognize Special Opportunities for Children with Disabilities

Certainly not all children with disabilities have behavior challenges. However, often the child with special learning needs also has difficulties in managing his or her behavior. Special considerations should be given to these children so that appropriate guidance can occur.

Remember the following:

- Children with disabilities are, first and foremost, children.
- Consult with specialists who may be involved with the child.
- Modify the physical environment when necessary.
- Break down tasks into workable units or activities.
- Integrate the child whenever possible into all regular activities.
- Promote cooperative learning and sharing among the children.
- Teach to the child's strengths to minimize any weaknesses.
- Encourage independence just as you would for all children.

Individuals should remember that labeling of young children has advantages and disadvantages (Esch, 2001). Labeling of children often allows for special services, but it also increases the risk for lowered expectations and negative attitudes. Stereotyping based on a label is common. Teachers and families must be aware of their own biases and feeling concerning children with special needs. *(See RESOURCES: SECA Position Statement on Assessing Development)*

Recognize Your Limits

Some children, for what ever reason need more specific help in guiding behavior. Teachers and families must admit that other individuals can help and should be involved. Remember to use the wisdom and expertise of others. Call on your program director, other teachers or caregivers. As a family you may also need to seek help from experts such as social workers or family therapists. Know the resources in your community and use them.

INDIRECT GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

Check Your Curriculum

Make sure YOU are not getting kids into trouble! As mentioned, an appropriate classroom or home environment, appropriate scheduling, and age appropriate activities are all critical components to prevention. The way a classroom or a home is arranged for access to toys and equipment sets the stage for either appropriate or inappropriate behavior. The flow of the day, or the schedule, should account for the developmental characteristics of young children. Children are active, curious, friendly, angry, hungry, and many more things all rolled into one. They have needs based on physical, intellectual, social, and emotional characteristics. Activities should challenge, yet never frustrate.

Take a minute to review the ***Best Practices for Behavior Guidance: A Checklist*** form, located in the appendices. See if <u>you</u> need to make adaptations in order to effectively change the behavior of a child or any children you may nurture. For example, does the physical environment assist in appropriate physical activities? Does the schedule take into account the age(s) of the child or children?

Use Other Simple Preventive Measures

In addition to creating the proper environment and daily schedule, Dodge & Colker (1992) offer other prevention techniques which every teacher and family should utilize:

- Anticipate and plan ahead to ward off possible problems.
- Help children understand the consequence of their actions by stating them clearly.
- Help children solve problems themselves before deciding on a particular consequence whenever possible.
- Refrain from dwelling on mistakes or accidents. We all have them!
- Watch for restlessness especially before lunch and outside play. Accept "wiggles" when the children are tired or hungry.
- State rules firmly and positively, never harshly and judgmentally.
- Help children learn to share by creating activities in which it is fun to share, such as throwing a ball. Expect children to have difficulties in sharing as young children are still learning this important aspect of life.
- Make it easier for children to wait their turn by using kitchen timers, waiting lists or example clocks.

Involve the Children

For children over three years of age, it is very important to incorporate the children's ideas and thoughts into prevention techniques such as allowing them to establish classroom or home rules. The adult who encourages

young children to make decisions, such as creating classroom or home rules, demonstrates how to control behavior. Castle and Rogers (1993) suggest that when children are given the opportunity to create their own rules several things happen. There is active involvement, children are able to reflect on their own experiences, a sense of community is established, problem solving occurs through negotiation, and children have ownership of the practices in their world. Self-discipline is enhanced!

Allow Children As Many Choices As Possible

To further develop self-discipline, children must be offered choices and opportunities to make decisions about their activities (Dodge & Colker, 1992). It is unnatural for young children to function as little robots only doing what the teacher tells them. Providing many choices of play activities allows children to feel in control of their lives, therefore eliminating power struggles. Letting children make decisions and allowing them to have real choices creates a learning environment to develop mental structures for future use (Wakefield, 1994). Individual children can search for meaning, compare, debate and learn how to use their intellect. Think about how you would feel if your day was totally directed by someone else and you never had a choice about how you spent your time. Not very exciting or fulfilling!

Always explain what choices are available and make sure they are real choices. For example "Would you like to pick up the blocks?" may not really be a choice. The child does have the option of declining. It would be better to say, "I will be happy to help you pick up the blocks. Would you like for me to help you pick up the blocks, or do you want to do it by yourself?" Don't allow children to choose inappropriate behavior because you gave them the opportunity.

Always ENHANCE Self-Esteem

A child's self-esteem comes primarily from those around him. A child who misbehaves often has poor self-esteem, or unacknowledged needs. Knowing that others see us as significant and worthy also influences self-esteem. Therefore, teachers and families must recognize the impact they make on children's emotional well being and thus their behaviors. Such simple things as voice tone and implied values either demonstrate to children a lack of respect or appropriate ways to behave. For example, Jennifer (who is absolutely adorable, smart, and well behaved) arrives at school. You greet her warmly with a hug and compliment her on her pretty outfit. Joss arrives. He always has a runny nose, is dirty, and never behaves appropriately. You greet him saying, "Joss, we aren't going to have the same problems today as we did yesterday, are we?" When Jennifer runs inside, we ignore it. When Joss takes two quick steps we call attention to his inappropriate behavior.

Teachers and families must constantly monitor their own behavior to ensure all children are treated with the same love and respect, even those that drive us crazy! While all children deserve our respect, the children in the world like Jennifer do not need our gentleness as much as those children that Joss represents. Yet, parents and teachers tend to give more of themselves to the well-behaved, cute child than to those who really need them the most.

Hendrick (1996) gives the following practical suggestions to enhance self-esteem and ultimately behavior.

Make sure you:

- Show unconditional positive regard for every child.
- Give honest recognition and encouragement to every child.
- Demonstrate a respect to the child's choices - even though you may not agree with them.
- Dispense any consequences as unobtrusively or quietly as possible.
- Allow children to experience mastery by providing choices and independent activities.
- Provide many opportunities for children to experience success.
- Offer creative and open-ended activities, which have no right or wrong answer.

Another indirect way to enhance self-esteem and behavior is to avoid negative nonverbal and verbal communications. Concentrate on positive approaches to children, especially those who have trouble controlling their behavior. The table on the following page summarizes negative behaviors and positive behaviors.

Avoid

Gestures like...

- shaking your finger
- using ridicule
- pushing and shoving
- using sarcasm
- mimicking
- sneering
- stamping your foot
- hitting

Words like...

- Use your head.
- It won't work.
- Don't you know?
- Shape up or ship out.
- Anybody can do that.
- That's stupid.
- Knock it off.
- Shut up!

Concentrate on

Gestures like...

- good eye contact
- a relaxed posture
- gazing warmly
- extending a hand
- kneeling down to the child's level when talking

Words like...

- Thanks very much.
- Let's talk this over.
- I like your help.
- I understand.
- I think about you.
- May I help you?
- I enjoy our time together.

Use Praise Appropriately

Effective and ineffective ways to use praise should be noted. Driscoll and Nagel (1999) suggest that a better term for "praise" might be "encouragement" because it does not place judgment or denote a particular value on behavior. Encouragement should be specific and avoid interpretations and value judgments. For example to say, "I see you used a lot of blue in your painting." is better than, "Your painting is very pretty and you are a wonderful artist." Encouragement is best done in private and should focus on what happened rather than the product. For example say, "You picked up all the blocks which helped clean up our room." rather than, "You were a very good girl." The differences are subtle, but affect the way children see themselves.

According to Mangin (1998), overuse of praise can raise doubts about the credibility of the messenger and make children dependent on the judgment of others. Praise is important, but she suggests you ask yourself the following questions, "Am I too generous with praise? Is my praise one-size-fits-all? Do I use praise to manipulate children? Are children becoming dependent on praise?"

DIRECT GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES

Generally, the indirect guidance techniques described thus far are sufficient to eliminate many behavior difficulties. However, realities of the classroom and home dictate that teachers and families sometimes have greater challenges with some children. More direct approach with guidance techniques must be utilized to help alter some behavior. An individual child may need to establish new ways of coping, dealing with anger, or defending his or her rights.

Coordinating behavior changes in children requires a great deal of energy on the part of adults. Time must not be wasted on inappropriate guidance, which damages a child's self-esteem and emotional development. Teachers and parents must use all their energy modeling self-control, enhancing self-concept, and giving children methods for dealing with many of life's demands. The direct guidance techniques described here utilize an adult's energy, but they do not deplete it. Children's behaviors are changed for the better while self-esteem is enhanced.

Catch All the Children Being GOOD

The power of positive reinforcement of almost any behavior has been known for many, many years. Yet, in the classroom and home, teachers and parents often spend much of their time

reacting to and reinforcing BAD behavior. All children need attention. If the only real attention a child gets is for bad behavior, then that behavior is reinforced. It will be repeated! On the other hand, every time a child is caught being good, that behavior is reinforced. Adults always have a choice of catching children being good or catching them being bad. The option is almost too simple; catch children being good, praise it and good behavior will reappear!

This direct guidance technique of catching children being good is particularly useful for children with chronic behavior problems. Unfortunately it is practiced least with those children who need it the most. To encourage use of this technique, try simple nonverbal and verbal communications that convey to children that you have caught them. Caught them being good! When you see the child who drives you crazy sharing a toy, sitting during a group time, or behaving in any way appropriately (even if it is just for a second) try the techniques in the list below.

Nonverbal reinforcers	**Verbal reinforcers**
Smiling immediately	Be proud of yourself for ...! (be specific)
Patting on the back	I enjoy having you here.
Giving a thumbs up signal	I hope you like what you just did. I sure do.
Hugging, if appropriate	I am impressed. I hope you are too.
	Good job on ...! (be specific)

All of the negative nonverbal and verbal behaviors described in the section on self-esteem must be avoided for the child with challenging behaviors. All of the positive nonverbal and verbal

communication techniques previously described must be utilized with those children who you probably feel deserve them the least. Use your energies wisely!

For the child with behavior difficulties in your classroom, do the following every day:

- Greet that child warmly, with no reference to previous or anticipated inappropriate behaviors.
- Send a note home telling about something positive the child did at school.
- Ignore inappropriate behavior if you have ever ignored it in another child, especially if it is just annoying and not dangerous.
- Touch and hug for no reason.
- Interact with the same enthusiasm you show to the very best behaved child in your room.
- Say "good-by" as warmly as you would to any other child.

A Word of Caution!

Children who have consistently misbehaved in a variety of situations (at home, at church, at school) are very often initially confused by the "catch them being good" technique. They do not know how to react, and therefore utilize negative behaviors that may seem just the opposite of what you want. They appear to not appreciate your kindness. A child may kick the chair after you have mentioned how good he or she was to sit in it. Expect reactions that will surprise you and even make you mad. Try to ignore the inappropriate behaviors. These behaviors eventually disappear and are replaced with much more acceptable ones.

Utilize POSITIVE Guidance Techniques Which Help Children CHANGE Behavior

Ever sat in a timeout chair? Try it next time you overeat, oversleep, or say something to someone you didn't really mean. If you were caught speeding and the police officer made you sit in a timeout chair, would it keep you from ever going over the speed limit again? What if that police officer shoved you into your car or hit you? What if your boss repeatedly told you how inefficient you were and that you were not really worth having on the job? Would any of these tactics really make you change any of your behaviors? How would they affect your self-esteem?

Very often adults utilize techniques with children similar to those mentioned above. These inappropriate direct guidance techniques are ineffective because they do not teach a child new behaviors; they actually harm that child's self-esteem and lead to resentment.

Discipline teaches, it does not punish!

The root word to "discipline" is "disciple" and that word implies teaching or following. It does not mean "punishment". Very often, however, families and teachers feel that children learn appropriate ways of behaving through punishment. The opposite is true. When we treat aggressive behavior by jerking a child into timeout, we are showing aggressive behavior. When we yell angrily at a child, we are not showing self-control. Remember too that young children think and act differently than adults. A behavior that is unreasonable to us in the classroom or living room, such as running, seems very natural to them. Yet, the child is punished for it. Avoid just simply asking the child to stop. It is better to redirect the young child and tell him why running in this environment is not a good idea.

Children really learn self-control, self-discipline, coping skills, and appropriate ways of interacting through positive approaches. Therefore, it is essential that teachers use positive discipline strategies that help children change inappropriate behaviors while enhancing self-esteem. A teacher's energy is not wasted on punitive measures that, in reality, accomplish nothing.

Ignore Inappropriate Behavior and/or Redirect

Sometimes to simply ignore inappropriate behavior especially when children are tired or hungry is best. Adults sometimes force issues that are simply not worth the effort. For example, wiggles and restlessness in a circle activity just before lunch are not worth getting upset about. Bad language and rude gestures can often be ignored. Behaviors, which are consistently ignored, lose their power. To swear when no one seems to hear you is no fun. Ignoring works best with behaviors that are annoying rather than dangerous. Continuing to ignore such disruptions may be difficult, but ultimately a lesson is really learned. Ignoring the inappropriate behavior while redirecting the child to something exciting or worthwhile is even better. For example, if a toddler is screaming for a toy that another child is enjoying, ignore the screaming and redirect the child to an equally attractive toy.

Reflective Listening Accompanied by an Alternative Behavior

Whenever a child is doing or about to do something unacceptable, step in and ask how the child may be feeling (you may need to recommend vocabulary) and suggest an alternative to the inappropriate behavior. For example, when a child has just hit someone, you intercede with, "I know you are really angry, but you may not hit other people. Tell me (or a child's name)

By recognizing how a child feels in a particular situation, the adult shows respect while identifying the emotions that caused the problem. Discussing an alternative solution teaches the child not only what **not** to do, but **what to do**. Remember discipline is to teach, not punish. Assist children in identifying an alternative behavior whenever possible. Also, to solve every problem or conflict children encounter is not necessary. Often just being supportive and allowing children to develop their own solutions to confrontations are more effective. How else will they ever learn to do it on their own?

In some cases, it will take many, many times before a child will actually replace the inappropriate behavior with an acceptable one, but keep encouraging it. In some cases approximations or "shaping" will occur. For example, a child may hit while verbally expressing feelings as well. Later, he or she may give a loud and inappropriate scream to express anger, but may not hit. Both are little steps in the right direction. The table on the following page highlights some inappropriate behaviors along with alternatives.

Inappropriate Behavior	Reflective Listening/ Alternative Behavior
Throwing sand on the playground	"I know you like to throw things, but sand hurts eyes. What else could you throw that wouldn't hurt anyone?"
Pushing and shoving during a transition in activities	"I know you are in a hurry to get outside, but pushing will make others fall. What animal could you be that moves slowly?"
Using foul language	"I know you really want to use some words you have heard that sound big and important, but those words don't really say what you mean. Can you think of other ones to use?" (Possibly suggest some alternatives.)
Refusing to pick up toys	"I know just how you feel; you are just like me; I hate to clean up too when I'm having fun, but it's time to eat. Our food will get cold so let me help you get started picking up the blocks."

The ultimate goal of using alternative solutions is to get the child to make selections of appropriate behaviors, not the teacher or parent. (Oken-Wright, 1992). Sometimes teachers and families intervene in conflicts between children with statements such as, "Jerry is really angry and wants to play with you." This helps a child see the situation and react appropriately.

Many adults, however, always use direction to get what they want and never give the children chances to try alternatives on their own. Remember that children learn to use alternatives by giving them the chance to choose them!

Cantrell (1995) urges us to rethink traditional discipline in terms of conflict resolution and guidance. We should think in terms of "mistaken behavior", rather than misbehavior. The traditional approach criticizes children, often in public, while guidance in finding alternatives teaches children to resolve problems themselves.

Precise Communications at Eye Level

Sometimes children just simply need to have a rule clarified in a firm and no nonsense manner at their eye level. Use a voice that is not harsh or ugly, but one that reflects confidence and a belief about what is said. If you want a child to stop throwing paint, say "Stop throwing the paint. Please clean up the paint." For older children you can add the rationale and consequence of the action, "Someone might fall if the paint is not cleaned up."

Do not whine to children; they will not listen. Do not threaten children or constantly warn of impending punishments, they will push their luck to the bitter end. Simply state the rule and give a logical consequence or alternative behavior. Finally, be very, very, very consistent. For children to learn that rules have meaning, rules and consequences must be consistently and appropriately applied to all children.

What we say to children and how we say it, both reveal our attitudes toward children and set the tone of the classroom or home. According to Stone (1993), teachers and caregivers use either responsive or restrictive language. Responsive language conveys a positive regard and a respect for children. It provides

alternatives and choices; it utilizes reasons and explanations. Restrictive language involves power-assertions, threats, punishments, and criticisms. Restrictive language discourages independence and encourages only submission to authority and rules. Which do you use the most, responsive or restrictive? Which do you like for people to use with you?

Natural and Logical Consequences

Meaningful and logical consequences to inappropriate behaviors must always be sought. They sometimes require creativity and much energy on the part of teachers and parents. For example, to place a child in a timeout chair, rather than wait for that child to clean up his or her mess is easier. However, cleanup rules and correct procedures are much more revealing when a child must assist you in cleaning up spilled paint or carelessly thrown puzzle pieces. When a child has hurt another child, spend time with the victim who has been hurt and ignore (for just a minute) the child who did the damage. If possible, have the child whom did the hitting accompany you to give the hurt child first aid. For jobs poorly done (like clean up) insist that the job be done over. TEACH AN APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR with the logical consequence.

Remove From the Scene

Removing from the scene, or timeout, is probably the most frequently used direct guidance technique available. It must, however, be utilized in a manner that is not punitive. Its function is to help a child learn how to calm down when he or she has lost control. Timeout should be used for only very short periods of time and must represent a place (or a way) for a child to modify

or gain control of inappropriate behavior. It must not evoke a power struggle that only focuses on getting the child to stay in a specific spot. Simply putting a child in timeout imposes only external control. Opportunities for valuable coping skills are lost (Schreiber, 1999). Remember discipline should teach, not punish. Ask yourself if the child in timeout is learning a new coping behavior or simply being penalized? When used appropriately, removing from the scene allows a child to calm down and to reflect (with the teacher's guidance) on any inappropriate actions and on a better way of behaving.

Do not abuse or overuse timeout!

Unfortunately, timeout is probably the most abused and overused direct guidance technique available. Very often the same child, day after day, is the one who gets sent to timeout. Time out is obviously not working and something else should be tried! The child needs a different approach such as being shown alternative behaviors for those that need changing or the use of logical consequences.

Use Functional Behavioral Assessment Strategies

Functional Behavior Assessment refers to the powerful process of identifying factors that contribute to problem behaviors (Jones and Jones,1998). It is utilized to determine the relationship between a person's environment and the occurrence of inappropriate actions. It is so powerful that this assessment is now required for children with documented behavioral disorders. The focus is on identifying patterns of inappropriate behavior and the immediate circumstances surrounding what happened. Adults examine their own behavior, the environment, and any related events. Strategies are then put into place that either prevent the problem or teach the child how to

cope effectively with the event or circumstances. Use the process for any child who consistently has inappropriate behavior. It can be very revealing! The ***Behavior Guidance Analysis Form*** at the end of this booklet will assist you in moving through a similar process.

Set REALISTIC Expectations for Change

Changing behavior is very hard to do! What about you should be changed? Do you smoke, eat or sleep too much, procrastinate? Why haven't you changed it? Don't you want to change it? Sometimes adults expect a trip to the timeout chair or even a trip to the "great timeout chair" in the director's or principal's office to immediately change a child's inappropriate behavior. In reality, altering behaviors (especially those that continue to be reinforced, by positive or negative reactions) takes a great deal of time, even years. Most young children want to please adults, yet some consistently behave in ways that may be inappropriate. For families and teachers to have realistic expectations for changing those behaviors, it is imperative. Always remember the developmental characteristics of young children, they are just beginning to develop self-control and positive social skills such as sharing. They are not adults! Realistic expectations are absolutely necessary for positive direct guidance techniques to work.

Involve the Parents

As teachers, it is important to involve parents when attempting to change behavior in the classroom. Very often inappropriate behaviors have been reinforced at home and need changing there as well. Dumbro (1992) offers some specific ways to involve parents.

- Communicate your philosophy about discipline and guidance to parents.
- Model positive discipline techniques in front of the parents.
- Discuss behavior management at parents meetings and during conferences.
- Give resources to parents which may assist them in dealing with inappropriate behaviors. *(See Resource List)*

Very few parents wish to harm their children. Yet, many parents lack the knowledge and skills to effectively guide children's behaviors. It is often up to those who work with children in a structured environment, such as a child care facility, to provide that knowledge.

NEVER, EVER
Give Up On a Child

Just as changing behavior is very hard to do, giving up is easy. To give up on a child who does not seem to care about you is especially easy. To change behaviors requires time, but it requires much of your energy to never give up on children. Teaching self-discipline, coping skills, and ways of interacting successfully with others is the foundation to all future personal success. Therefore, **YOU MUST NOT GIVE UP!** The rewards are too great; the consequences too grave.

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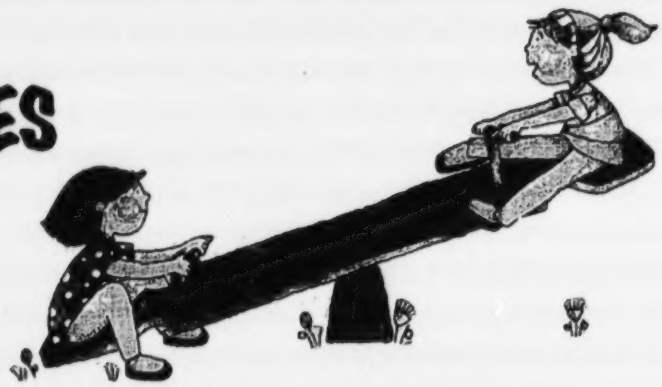

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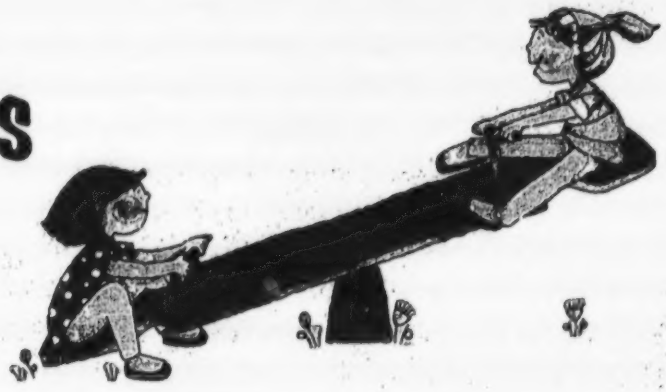

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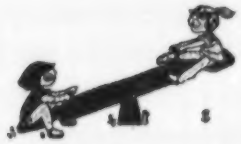

WEB SITES

There is an abundance of web sites available when you use the descriptors "Behavior Guidance" and "Children". Specific organizations with resources and links are listed below.

http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

http://www.cec.sped.org

http://www.childrennow.org

http://www.NAEYC.org

http://preventchildabuse.org/fs.html

APPENDIX

Appendix A
BEST PRACTICES FOR BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE:

A CHECK LIST

	Always	Usually	Never
My classroom/home environment has:			
enough adults to help children learn			
clear divisions between interest areas or learning centers to prevent misuse of materials and conflicts between children engaged in different activities			
limited open spaces and long, unbroken halls - both of these encourage running			
a great deal of softness such as throw rugs, pillows and stuffed animals so that the children feel relaxed and at home			
ample and easy access to toys to prevent boredom and fighting over equipment			

Checklist continued on next page.

CHECK LIST (Continued)

	Always	Usually	Never
My classroom/home schedule has:			
unrushed times to meet all the physical needs of the children such as toileting, eating, and sleeping			
a balance of active and quiet times both inside and outside to account for the children's need to be both active and quiet			
very limited occasions when children must wait for activities to begin			
only small amounts of time which are teacher-directed, large group activities			
large time periods (of at least 45 minutes) for self-directed play			
transitions which utilize music and movement between various activities to help eliminate pushing and shoving among the children			
The activities in my classroom/home are:			
based on age-appropriateness			
challenging, yet never frustrate			
allow the children to be in control of their learning			
provide lots of choices within choices			
In my classroom/home I:			
model the way I want children to behave			
involve families/others as much as possible or when needed			
never give up on a child			

Appendix B
BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE ANALYSIS FORM

Child's Name:_____ Age: _____

Adult(s):_____ Date: _____

Indirect Guidance Analysis

1. Briefly describe the physical characteristics of this child.

2. State some reasons why you feel this child might misbehave.

3. Describe a unique and wonderful characteristic of this child.

4. Describe any unique cultural aspects the family of the child may possess.

5. Describe a behavior you would like to change and document when and where the behavior occurs in the classroom.

Direct Guidance Analysis
6. Describe when and where the problem behavior is most likely to occur. Who is involved?
7. Circle which of the following positive techniques you have used with this child: reflective listening, removed from the scene, ignored inappropriate behavior, used natural and logical consequences, showed an appropriate alternative behavior.
8. How will you catch the child being good and what positive techniques will you try now?
9. In what time frame will you expect to change behavior? Be realistic!
10. How will you involve others in the change - families, other teachers, etc.?

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About SECA

The Southern Early Childhood Association serves the interests of early childhood educators concerned with child development. SECA has state affiliates in 13 Southern states. For information about joining SECA, our services to members or our other publications, please conact the SECA office.

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